

The Reckless and the Brave by **TheUpsideDown**

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Angst, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Billy H., OC, Steve H.

Pairings: Billy H./OC

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2017-11-28 20:44:14

Updated: 2018-02-11 08:26:37

Packaged: 2019-12-17 00:39:11

Rating: M

Chapters: 4

Words: 17,536

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Who knew moving to Hawkins, Indiana wasn't the only life changing decision in Iris Moore's life...? Stuck between two guys, Iris is left undecided. Should she choose the reckless path or the brave path? I suck at summaries, just check out the story if you're interested. (OCxBilly)(OCxSteve).

1. Chapter 1

I have a major crush on Dacre Montgomery and I just needed to read a fic but couldn't find any out there so I decided to write my own. I hate the character Billy and don't condone any of his actions, but I seriously just need...a Dacre fic because... he's fucking hot. And I've read all the Power Rangers ones out there... IT'SNOT ENOUGH! lol. Plus I also love Steve's character so I figured I'd have more fun with a Stranger Things fic.

If you haven't guessed already, this fic is gonna be about a love triangle with the reckless (Billy) and the brave (Steve). I'll probably have two endings: one for Billy and one for Steve. I'm also going to try and write as close to the character's personality as possible, but I know I'll struggle with Billy's considering he's such a fucking dick lol.

Also don't know if I'll finish this story, depends on how interested I am in it, and if anyone likes it lololol.

Italics are thoughts.

Well, enjoy.

Disclaimer: I don't own any characters from the Netflix series Stranger Things, just the OC, and whatever plot I conjure.

Sunday | August 25, 1985

Hawkins, Indiana was dreadfully different than the bustling, windy city hidden by skyscrapers Iris Moore had grown to know. The change of scenery was strange and she couldn't help but feel out of place in the small, quiet, outdated cornfield town. It felt so barren, so isolated...as if the town was in its own glass encased dome. But things happen, life ends. And the main reason her parents replaced their cozy apartment for a carbon cut-out suburban home was to take care of her grandma...that sole reason was now gone and Iris was stuck there.

But it wasn't all too bad, during the summer she found a nice gig with

a steady paycheck babysitting some of her favorite kids, and her only friends. They loved her just as much as she did them. One in particular was Maxine Mayfield. Her parents refused Iris's offer, informing her Max had an older brother who could babysit her for free, but Iris didn't care about the money anymore she just loved being around Max and the other kids. She managed to persuade them by offering to do it for free whenever their son wasn't able to take care of her and after a few times she babysat the wild redhead, her parents fell in love with Iris's 'service', and regularly asked for her help.

"Alright," Iris breathed, standing before the cream-colored door clad in a loose Spider-Man t-shirt that was tucked within her high-waist jean shorts, and pressed the doorbell twice. She ran a hand through her disheveled, brown hair as she waited for someone to welcome her in. Minutes rolled by and Iris grew impatient, provoking her to smack the doorbell once again, unsure if anyone had heard it the first time.

Soon after there was the sound of metal clattering to the ground before the door swung open, revealing—what had to have been—Max's step-brother. Iris had never met him before or heard much about him, excluding the disdainful comments Max, Lucas, Dustin, Will, and Mike would sneer about him. Other than that, no one spoke of him. It was a subject they tended to avoid, a subject they **needed** to avoid. So, Iris never pressed them about it, it wasn't in her place to, and the few times he was mentioned in their conversations, she could visibly see the tension, the uncomfortableness in their body language. Because of that, she was determined to stay away from him. Iris didn't want to upset any of the kids.

"What do you want?" The irritation was audibly noticeable in his gruff reply as he exhaled a puff of smoke from his cigarette while his free arm rested against the door frame. The sleeveless t-shirt he wore was drenched in sweat as it clung desperately against his muscular form. He was beautiful. No, that was an understatement. The guy was gorgeous, and Iris could feel her cheeks immediately flush once she realized how long her eyes wandered along his frame as if she was subconsciously engraving his build in her memory.

Iris's green eyes hurriedly flew up to his alluring blue ones and cleared her throat before nonchalantly responding, "I'm here for

Max."

Billy's forehead crinkled while he raised an eyebrow in a questioning manner, silently observing the stranger on his doorstep. "The shit?"

Confused by his retort, she inquired, "Excuse me?"

"What do you want with that shithead?" Billy scanned her over, growing more interested the longer his eyes lingered. He wondered why an attractive girl her age needed to see Max, "I've never seen you before...Did you just move here?" His lips spread into an open grin as his cigarette nestled between the corner of his mouth, "You definitely don't look like the girls from around here."

"I'm from Chicago," Iris murmured, feeling herself grow hot after witnessing that devilish grin of his. She was physically attracted to him, and she was damn well sure that more than half of the teenage girls who had eyes in Hawkins was also attracted to him. Billy looked like he was pulled out of a modeling magazine with that gorgeous tanned skin, those tempting baby blue's, and that rock star mullet any girl would die to run her hands through. Iris bit down on her lip, hoping the pain would set her mind straight.

A city girl... He smirked, a strange glimmer flickering across his eyes, "So, Chicago, why are you here?"

Iris pushed her dirty thoughts to the back of her mind and cleared her throat again, "To babysit Max."

She could sense his mood instantly shift once he narrowed his eyes as his husky voice stated, "She's 14, she doesn't need a babysitter."

Iris watched him silently, wondering if she was going to witness the reason why her friends hated him, and sternly replied, "That's not what your parents told me."

Billy's jaw tightened at the word 'parent's' and inhaled a long drag to calm himself down, "She's got me to look after her. She doesn't need you."

"Doesn't look like you're doing a good job," The brunette stepped onto the door frame, a few inches apart from touching his sweaty build,

and coolly glanced toward his workout equipment. Iris had always been assertive, that's what happened to a person when they grew up in a chaotic, crime infested city like Chicago. She wasn't afraid to speak up, to challenge someone, to put someone in their place—no matter how physically attracted she was to them. She was stern, she was forward, she was demanding; and when she knew she was right, she always got her way. It didn't mean she was heartless or a brat; far from that actually.

Billy peered down at her 5'2" stature as he appreciated the determination in her eyes. She was definitely different than the hicks in Indiana who only knew how to follow, to listen. He was growing bored of the same girls easily throwing themselves at him; there was no challenge, no fight. He wanted to have fun, he wanted to play.

His eyes dropped down toward Iris's rosy, pink lips as he thought to himself how much he wanted to taste them before craning his neck downward to meet her at eye level. He then pulled the cigarette from his mouth and blew the putrid smoke into her face before he replied with a rough growl, "Get lost."

"Nice try, babe." The bitter fume caused tears to prickle at the edge of her eyes but that wasn't going to stop her from getting inside. Placing her fingers against his chest, she pushed him backwards, making enough room to slide past him, and into the house, "Just think of it as gaining your free time back. I'm sure you've got more important things to do, right?" She waved a hand toward his equipment, not even bothering to look back at him as she spoke.

"Babe?" Billy smirked while his eyes scanned her from behind before finally resting them on her plump ass. His tongue darted across his lips just imagining her thick, but slim frame in a pair of lacey lingerie. He wanted her more than ever now, and he was determined to have her, "This'll be fun."

"Max," Iris called as she peered into the first bedroom, hoping it was Maxine's.

"Here!" A giggle came from behind the brunette, causing her to turn around and see the freckled teen poking her head through an open

door. "How can you still not figure out which room is mine? You've only been here like 100 times."

"Don't sass me," Iris scolded the younger girl in a mocking manner before following her into the bedroom and plopping down alongside her on the mattress.

"Sorry about Billy answering the door," Max pursed her lips, "If I wasn't in the bathroom I would've answered."

"Don't worry about it, he didn't give me a hard time."

"Really?" She questioned, a look of shock sketched across her face.

"He was acting all tough and trying to keep me away, but I just walked right past him. He's not as scary as you guys make him out to be."

"That's 'cause you don't know him."

"Perhaps...anyway, are you nervous?" Iris smirked, wiggling her eyebrows animatedly while poking Max's forehead.

"No," She scoffed and swatted Iris's hand away, "Why would I be nervous? It's just high school..."

"It's a new school though, completely different from your middle school."

"I've been to so many different schools. Buildings don't scare me."

"Ooh~ look at you," Iris teased, causing Max to roll her eyes in irritation. "But in all honesty, I was talking about the atmosphere. It's a different world filled with an over-rotting stench of puberty and peer pressure."

Max couldn't help but grin at the senior's explanation, "Are you trying to tell me not to do drugs?"

"That's exactly what I'm trying to tell you," Iris tucked her messy waves behind her ear as another smirk grew across her lips. "And sex, no sex for you and Lucas."

The freshman's face turned the brightest shade of red Iris had ever witnessed and sputtered her response in disbelief, "Y-you're crazy!"

"I'm just kidding, jeez," She stuck her tongue out at her while roughing up her hair, earning another irritated expression from Max.

"Can you stop that?"

Iris chuckled and raised her hands up in defeat, "Okay, okay! No more hair ruffling, I promise."

The two spent the next few hours gossiping about random things, but mostly Lucas. Nothing had changed since the Snow Ball dance and the red head was worried she had done something wrong. She wasn't sure if he actually liked her as a friend or more than a friend. Every time Max asked him to hang out with her alone he'd always make up some excuse as to why he couldn't go or would cancel last minute. She didn't understand, Lucas had definitely looked happy when they kissed that night, so why was he avoiding her? It was frustrating, especially since she really liked him. Max didn't know what to do anymore and decided to pour her heart out to Iris, seeking advice from someone with experience.

"That's tough..." Iris hummed in contemplation, "It's obvious Lucas likes you. I think he's just nervous and doesn't know how to go about it."

"What am I supposed to do then?"

"Just be blunt. Tell him how you feel and ask him if he feels the same way."

"That's so embarrassing," Max mumbled sheepishly, rubbing the back of her neck.

"You'll get over it," Iris smiled before she glanced at the alarm clock that sat at the edge of Max's bedside table. "We should get going or else we'll be late for the new campaign. You know how Mike gets when we don't start on time."

"Yeah, you're right."

They both left the small bedroom, passing through the hallway, and entering the vast front room cluttered with exercise equipment. But before they could reach the front door, Billy's rough voice tugged their attention toward his bare form.

Wearing nothing but a pair of gym shorts and a silver chain necklace, he broadly sauntered toward them, "Where are you going?"

Max grunted with a glare, "Out."

Billy gritted a warning through his teeth, "Watch. Your. Attitude."

Iris watched him through wary eyes, noticing how quick his behavior changed from when she met him earlier in the day. She didn't know him well enough to determine his personality or what kind of person he was. But after the two short interactions she shared with him, Iris could easily detect the distaste Billy held for his step-sister.

Trying to calm the situation down before it could escalate, Iris stated her sentence with ease, "We're going to Mike's. We'll be back before curfew."

"You're not going anywhere," Billy declared as he pulled a pack of cigarettes out from his waistband, placing the fag between his lips, and lighting it quickly with a cheap red lighter he dug out from inside the pack. Tossing the lighter on one of the side tables pressed against the wall, he inched forward. His face seemed so relaxed as he inhaled the bitter smoke but Iris could tell from his piercing eyes how serious he was, "You're babysitting her so do your job, stay here, and watch the little shit."

"Um...alright," Iris chuckled in pure disbelief, "First of all, I'll be watching her the whole time whether it's in this house, a friend's house, the arcade, or a burger joint. Just because I'm babysitting her doesn't mean we're supposed to stay at a designated area. Secondly, your parents trust me to watch her as long as she's back before curfew, which means we're going."

Billy's jaw tightened, growing annoyed at her back-talk, "Last time I checked she was my shit, not yours. Which means you both stay here."

"She has a name," The brunette narrowed her and crossed her arms in an assertive manner. "It's Max, not 'shit'."

"Same thing."

"No, actually, it's not. Anyway, we're gonna go now. You have a good one," Iris placed her hand on the red head's back and pushed her toward the door. "Come on, Max."

Before she could take a step forward, Billy snatched Iris's wrist in a tight grasp and tugged her toward him, causing her to lose her footing, and tumble straight into his exposed chest.

He was muscular. Iris had noticed that when Billy answered the door earlier. She wasn't afraid to admit that he had a really attractive body, hell, she immediately admitted it to herself the first time she laid eyes on him. But he was at least clothed then, and now her face was barely a few inches against his nude chest. Iris couldn't even remember the last time she'd been this close to a man before, a half-naked man. It had to have been at least over a year since, that was around the time she split up with her ex. But he couldn't compare to Billy, not even close. Being this close to him and smelling his faint scent of musky cologne easily threw her nerves on edge.

"Jesus, dude," She murmured, trying her best to avoid looking anywhere else but his determined eyes.

"Iris!" Max shouted in worry.

"I'm fine," She replied. "Go wait outside, I'll be right there."

"But-"

"Don't. You. Fucking. Move." Billy teased Max threateningly with a crooked and crazy smile as his cigarette hung limply between his pink lips.

"Go," Iris stated, glancing toward the young girl to show her a reassuring smile. "I'll be okay."

Max simply nodded, the worry still etched across her face as she scrambled out the front door.

Iris averted her gaze from where Max had recently been and back to Billy's piercing eyes. His cigarette still lay slack in his mouth before he tightened his lips around it and took another, deep drag.

Warily, Iris placed her free hand on his—which still held her wrist firmly—and slowly began to unwrap his fingers from around it, "What's your deal?"

"You," He growled as a low rumble emitted from the base of his throat which earned a soft gasp from Iris, unpleasantly surprising herself by how enticing it sounded to her ears.

She swallowed the small lump in her throat and tried to mask her slight nervousness with a playful smirk, not wanting to allow him the satisfaction of knowing that he aroused her. The thought of him making her feel that way also startled her, particularly since she was beginning to learn what kind of a person he was, "Because I'm not listening to you?"

Billy was caught off guard by her response and how alluring he found her defiant personality, especially considering how much he hated not being able to control others. But there was something about the way she resisted him that turned him on. Like he stated before, she was different, she was a challenge, and he wanted her. He could already imagine how great the sex would be, how much he'd punish her because of her stubborn and bratty behavior, how much she'd beg for his forgiveness, for his mercy.

He smirked in reply, re-tightening his grip around her wrist while pulling and pressing her against his chest. He towered over her small frame as if she were his prey, and he loved it. Placing his cigarette between his index and middle finger, Billy lowered his head to meet hers, his lips barely a breath away from enclosing her mouth within his as he greedily watched her eyes dilate in response from his quick reaction.

A few seconds pass before he finally exhales a reply, "I'll let you go this time."

"What?" Iris breathed in the sharp scent of tobacco, highly aware of how close their mouths were as her eyes wavered beneath his strong,

and enticing gaze.

"Here's a tip for the future...It's my way or the highway."

Iris remained silent, watching as his face barely caressed hers on its way over to her ear.

"You're lucky you're hot," Billy whispered as his lips brushed against the sensitive area of her earlobe, earning a soft gasp to fall from her mouth.

He immediately released her wrist with force, causing her to stumble backward before he turned around, and went straight to his bedroom without sparing a second glance at her.

"What the hell was that?" Murmuring to herself, Iris placed her hands over her heated cheeks as she felt the irritation burning in the pit of her stomach from how aroused he left her, "What the hell is wrong with me?"

2. Chapter 2

Ayyyyy, Just finished finals~ woot, woot!

Glad you guys are liking the story so far. I really appreciate the follows, favorites, and reviews; they're very motivating. I do want to warn you though, I do take forever to update, but that's because I'm super anal when it comes to my work. It needs to be perfect, in my eyes, before I upload it. I prefer good quality work over quantity, so bare with me.

Still struggling with Billy's character, but I'm trying T_T

Monday | August 26, 1985.

Iris's gaze was trained on her worn-out red Converse as they scuffed against the tar pavement of the school parking lot. Sighing, she ripped her eyes away from her shoes and landed them on the building in front of her, the building she would be calling her school for the next year. Hawkins High was small, it was plain, it was the opposite of her old school's high-structured concrete walls. But something felt oddly charming about it.

Heaving another sigh, as if to motivate the movement of her feet, she continued toward the school's entrance. It was the first day of her senior year at a new school with a different class... and no friends her age. Not that that mattered considering her nose was always stuck in a comic book and was much too distracted to even associate herself with another human being. Plus, she had her freshman buddies to talk to during passing periods and lunch breaks. She knew she'd be fine, her only issue was having over 100 stranger's eyes glued to her as if she were a foreign object disturbing their normality. If there was one thing Iris hated, it was unneeded and unwanted attention. She hated the thought of being pressed under a magnifying glass held by a snotty kid who had nothing better to do than to put all of their effort into lighting an ant on fire... just 'cause.

"Iris!" The brunette heard a chorus of shouts near the front doors and glanced over to see her animated kids waving her over as they held

unbelievably large smiles on their faces.

She felt a smile effortlessly spread across her lips at their unusual excitement and quickly changed her course toward them. All four boys were safely fastening their bicycles against the steel bike rack that was located near the front entrance before they tackled her into a giant hug once she reached them.

"Holy jeez, guys!" Iris chuckled, unsure of where to place her arms, and ultimately chose to keep them hovered over the boys, "You guys are getting way too tall for me and I'm not liking it."

Poking his curly head out from behind Will's figure, Dustin stated matter-of-factly, "You're just short."

She mockingly gasped as they pulled away from her, "Rude."

He gave her a simple, cheeky grin in return, causing Iris to chuckle in response, "Are you guys excited?"

Lucas slouched forward and grumbled in reply, "Not at all."

"We would be if you were in the same grade as us, Iris." Will held a cute and shy smile on his face, his doe eyes twinkling beneath the brunette's gaze.

"I'm flattered, really. But don't worry too much, you guys have each other so you'll be fine." Iris ruffled the boy's hair, creating a look of devastation on his face. Not only did the girl he liked treated him like a kid but she did it in front of his friends. The poor boy was mortified.

"Iris, I told you I don't like it when you do that," Will ran his fingers through his disheveled hair and placed all of the messed-up pieces in their rightful spot.

"Sorry, Will," Iris puffed her bottom lip in a pout before she poked his cheek. "Can you ever forgive me?"

The boy's face turned a bright shade of red as he averted his eyes, unable to sputter out a comeback. Thankfully, his friends took over the conversation—blindly unaware of Will's obvious crush on Iris.

"It'd be fun if we had classes with you, Iris," Mike said.

Dustin grabbed onto Mike's shoulder, adding in agreement, "We could work on awesome projects together and make really cool shit! Right, Lucas?"

But the thin boy didn't respond. He was too busy shifting his eyes around the school grounds; seeking for something, for someone. The boys ignored him, not really caring or paying too much attention to his awkward behavior. Iris was the only one who noticed his concerned eyes scanning the area around him and she couldn't help but smirk, knowing he was searching for Max.

Picking up on his anxiety, Iris asked, "Where's Max?"

Quickly jumping to her answer, Lucas easily verified her accusations, "Her brother usually drops her off."

"Speaking of..." Dustin sighed and pointed his finger toward the street so everyone would follow his line of sight.

Eye of the Tiger grew louder as Billy's car neared, stealing everyone's attention as the music pierced through the quiet atmosphere; breaking the serenity.

At least he's got good taste in music, Iris thought, nodding along to David Bickler's vocals that radiated from the Camaro's open windows.

"Can he be more of a douche bag?" Dustin crossed his arms over his chest.

"You crack me up, Dusty," Iris chuckled in response, her eyes darting toward the tan boy for a split second before returning her gaze back to the car.

Billy pulled into the parking space with a screeching halt, his car lurching forward from the abrupt stop before rocking back to its rightful spot. Iris wasn't the only one watching, everyone within the area had stopped, and observed with eager eyes as if they were anticipating their leader's arrival.

The brunette grew uncomfortable from how creepy her classmate's

longing expressions were, "Why are they looking at him like that?"

"Apparently, he was the most popular guy in school last year," Mike informed.

The ignition turned off, cutting the music short, and restoring the atmosphere's quiet lull. Max leaped out of the front seat, slamming the door shut, and flipping Billy off with a clenched jaw before running towards the group with a completely different, and relaxed expression.

Iris grew curious as she noticed Billy wasn't leaving. Instead, he did the complete opposite of what she expected. He got out of the car and rested against the trunk as he savored the last remnants of his cigarette. Iris immediately noticed how the tight jeans he wore hugged him in all the right places, accentuating all his blessings, and leaving almost no room for imagination.

Her cheeks grew hot and she peeled her eyes away from Billy just as a crowd of girls swarmed him. Clearing her throat, Iris asked, "Doesn't your brother have better things to do than hang out with high schoolers? Shouldn't he be attending his college courses or something?"

Dustin snorted, "That sack of rocks?"

The other's laughed at his remark and added more insults to his reply.

Max was the only one to answer Iris's question seriously, "He flunked last year."

Mike smirked, "That's not surprising."

"I wish he did graduate, then I wouldn't have to see his stupid face again," Max griped.

"It's not like you have much to worry about, especially after last year," Mike stated, the smirk still remaining on his mouth, "There's no way he's messing with you."

"No way in hell," Lucas cackled.

Dustin added, "He'd be crazy to even try."

"Normally he leaves me alone," Max agreed, a soft smile forming on her lips at the thought of not having a relationship with her step-brother, "He only orders me around now if it helps prevent him from getting in trouble with his dad."

"Wait," Iris stared at her younger friends in confusion as they spoke animatedly and vaguely about the event, "What happened last year?"

The freshman grew nervous, realizing they shouldn't have spoken so freely, and glanced around at each other while quickly muttering under their breath as if nothing happened, hoping to shut Iris's curiosity down.

"I'll let you have your secrets," She giggled before her attention was stolen by a loud gaggle of girls cooing and fawning over something, over someone; she knew instantly who it was, too.

"We should get going," Will declared, growing nervous at the thought of being late to class.

The others chimed in agreement, saying their goodbyes to the oblivious brunette as she nodded them off in response. Her eyes were trained on the fanatic girls drooling all over their King as they gushed over him enthusiastically. But he held a disinterested look, not even sparing a glance at the teenage girls who surrounded him (who—Iris was sure—were more than willing to strip themselves nude in front of everyone if he asked them to). She felt disgusted just watching and before she could tear her eyes away from the scene, Billy caught her gaze. A cocky grin spread on his mouth while his tongue darted across his dark, pink lips in a seductive manner, causing the girls to swoon as they assumed his enticing action was directed towards them. They soon stopped following after him, growing angry with each other as they fought amongst themselves as to which one of them he actually aimed his attention to, earning a well-deserved scoff from Iris.

She peeled her eyes away from his arrogance and the girl's stupidity before tightening her hands around her backpack's straps and hugging them closer to her body as she trudged her way into her new

high school. Twisting and turning through the halls, Iris finally reached her locker. She struggled with her combination, finally opening the metal door, and grabbing the books she needed before maneuvering her way towards her first class: English.

It was half way full by the time she entered the classroom. Most of the students were gossiping about their summer and the 'crazy shit' they did while the others gawked at her, wondering who the new girl was and why she didn't look like the other suburban girls. Compared to the corduroy skirts and gross fringe blouses the other girls wore, Iris wore an over-sized short sleeve, navy blue and maroon striped top that stopped right above her high waisted, black, straight-leg jeans. She didn't blame them for staring, Iris did have a strange sense of style ranging from tom-boy to super girly, but... she liked what she liked.

"Ah," Iris hummed as she spotted the empty seat in the back corner near the window and quickly strode toward it to avoid any more unnecessary attention. She tossed her backpack under her seat after pulling out her English textbook and the newest issue of *The Flash*.

Gasps and hushed whispers chorused through the classroom and Iris couldn't help but tear her gaze away from her comic book and towards the main attraction. Her mood instantly shifted, her shoulders automatically slumping at the sight of Billy sauntering in without a care in the world.

"Shit," Iris muttered, burying her face within her comic as she tried to ignore the girl's voices growing louder in excitement.

A thud was heard from the seat in front of Iris's and the class quickly quieted down. The only audible noise was their hushed whispers and the cogs hastily turning within their heads as they created 'crafty', false rumors they were itching to spread. Vigorously trying to ignore her surroundings, Iris kept her eyes glued to *The Flash*.

"You just gonna ignore me like that, babe?" She could hear his flirtatious tone laced within every word, causing a stir inside the classroom as more whispers exploded.

Shit, shit, shit! The brunette nibbled on her lip and before she could

reply—even though she wasn't planning to—their teacher walked into the room and cleared his throat to gain the student's attention. The seniors groaned, clouding Iris's relieved sigh as she slouched back against her chair, silently thanking her professor for the temporary distraction.

Iris couldn't believe it. Out of all the classes she had attended, Billy was in all of them. She had never been the religious type—even though her dead grandmother was the type of person who regularly preached and shoved her hymns and verses down people's throats. She was aware that there was something there, something mighty, and something powerful. But it was annoyingly obvious how unlucky she was by getting stuck with Billy in all of her classes, and because of that she truly believed there was no God.

Iris walked along the school in search for the kids during the lunch period, hoping their faces would temporarily relieve her stress, and clear her mind.

"Where the hell are they?" She muttered under her breath, her eyes scanning the area over and over again.

Iris extended her leg forward, ready for her foot to make contact with the pavement. But it didn't, instead her arm was tugged from behind her, causing her to stumble backward. Thinking it was one of the boys trying to scare her, she turned her head towards their direction with a playful smile, which instantly fell from her face when she realized the owner of that hand didn't belong to Will, Lucas, Dustin, or Mike.

"It's you," Iris pursed her lips and tugged her arm out of his grip before she turned around to face him completely.

"It's me," He purred softly, his chest almost vibrating from the deep feral sound he made.

Billy's eyes traveled along Iris's curves, appreciating each area his orbs landed on, and straying far too long on her hardly exposed midriff than Iris would've liked. A charming grin dripped from his lips while he took a step closer to the brunette.

"Are you going to tell me what you want or are you going to keep staring at me like the centerpiece of a Playboy magazine?" She shifted her weight onto one foot while crossing her arms under her chest, causing her top to raise a little more, and revealing her fair skin.

"Just enjoying the view," His pretty smile never left his face, his eyes finally meeting Iris's.

"Is that all? Can I go now?"

"Come on," He cooed, inching closer, and swinging his arm over her shoulder as he pressed forward—leading her to God-knows-where, "Let's have lunch together; get to know each other."

"Let's not," Iris shoved his arm off her shoulders, presenting the biggest, brightest, and disingenuous smile she could muster. "I've got plans already, I'm sure you can easily replace me with one of your fan club members. At least then you'd have pleasant company and a delicious meal. You know, with them feeding your ego and all."

"You see," Billy chuckled, enjoying the fire in her as he placed his arm around her shoulder again while he leaned his face close to her ear, and whispered, "It's you that I want, not them."

Heat rose to her cheeks for the second time that day, causing Iris to quickly dismiss it by clearing her throat, "I'm sorry to disappoint you." She turned her head toward his, their faces now incredibly close, and their position more than likely grabbing the attention of many onlookers, "But I'm not interested, babe."

Billy bit his lip, the pink flesh spilling out from his teeth's grip before uttering his next words in a playful growl, "Oh, but you will be."

"Is this your usual tactic?" A soft smirk danced across her mouth as her arm—not the one pressed against his side—reached for his (that was slung around her shoulder), and grabbed onto his forearm, refusing to look away, "Are you planning on driving me crazy to the point that I'm begging for your attention?"

"Is that a promise?" Billy drifted closer, his breath—which smelled of Menthol and stale tobacco—caressed her face.

Iris's eyes wavered beneath his, growing upset with herself for allowing him to easily affect her. And what pissed her off the most was she knew it was because she found him attractive, there was no denying it. She hated herself for it. Especially since he treated Max like shit and she was sure he treated other women like shit, too. He was a manipulator; it was easy to tell and Iris was sure he had seduced so many other girls within the school, stripped them bare, and humiliated them after getting what he wanted. Yet, there she was, being stupid like those other women, by allowing her sexual attraction toward him to cloud her senses. She wasn't 100% accurate that this was who he was as a person. But from how much hate her friends held for him, how much hate he held toward Max, and how he treated the girls that obsessed over him; Iris just knew he wasn't a good person, that she had to stay away from him. At least... She was trying to.

"Iris!" A familiar voice resembling Will's called out from behind her, causing her to realize her situation and how close she was to Billy.

"Nice chat," She ripped herself away from him and replied sarcastically, "Let's not do it again."

He smirked, glancing at the kids behind her wearing mortified expressions as they waited for her to approach them. Billy mentally noted how close she was to the shit's friends and he knew in order to win her over he had to somehow convince them he was okay, that he 'changed'. Fortunately, he wasn't desperate enough to even try attempting that. He honestly didn't care about their opinion and he was confident he could make Iris fall for him, regardless of their thoughts. It would take time and a lot of patience. And for her, he had all the patience in the world.

"You'll be begging, that's for sure," He whispered, sending her a provocative wink before turning on his heel, and walking away from her.

"What the hell was that?!" Lucas shouted and pointed a finger at Billy's descending form.

Will questioned her meekly, "Was he harassing you?"

"You want us to teach him a lesson?" Dustin formed a fist and punched the palm of his other hand, hinting to her that he'd get business done.

"Don't worry about it," Iris laughed. "Thanks for worrying though."

"Seriously," Will said, "He didn't hurt you, did he?"

"No, Prince Charming," She slid her arm around his torso and gave him a side hug, earning a blush from him. "Come on let's go eat! I'm starving!"

The last bell had already rung, allowing all the students to swarm out of the building, and spend the rest of their days doing 'stupid shit'. Thankfully, Iris didn't share her last few classes with Billy, which made it easier for her to leave her class, drop the books she didn't need off at her locker, and meet her friends at the front of the school.

She spotted the group near the bike rack, angrily discussing amongst themselves on the importance of a 20-sided die. The brunette shook her head, trying to hold in her laughter as she slowly stalked toward them, wanting to frighten them. Quietly reaching her friends, she threw her arms around Dustin and Mike, "Sup guys?"

"Holy shit!" Dustin shouted, earning a quick laugh from Iris. "Don't do that!"

"Sorry, sorry, it won't happen again."

"Nice try," Mike stated, unfazed by her scare tactic.

"I'll get you next time-"

"We're going to the arcade," Max interrupted as she rolled her skateboard with her right foot, "You should come with us, Iris."

"I would love to... But I've got an essay to start."

Surprised, Will questioned, "Already?"

"The perks of being a senior."

"Maybe another time, then?" Will looked at her with eager eyes.

"Of course, kid." She smiled in response, not noticing the disappointment on his face when the word 'kid' fell from her mouth. "I'll see you guys tomorrow."

Iris watched as they biked and skated away with a soft smile on her face as if she were watching her own kids leave, which it really felt that way to her. She had grown so close to them during the summer she felt like they were her family, more than her actual family was...

"Why am I getting so sentimental?" Iris laughed to herself and moved forward through the crowded parking lot, starting on her trek home.

She didn't own a car, she didn't need to when she lived in Chicago, not with all the transportation that the city offered: buses, trains, and taxis. But in Hawkins, since it was so small and the school was so close to her house, it didn't bother her that she didn't have her own car. She could easily get around by foot which gave her time to save up for a nicer vehicle rather than a used one.

"It's the new girl," Iris heard a boy whisper to a group of girls.

"She looks weird -"

"She is weird," Another girl interjected. "Didn't you see her hanging out with those nerds? They're freshman too..."

"She must like young boys."

"That's so creepy."

Iris rolled her eyes and ignored the rest of their conversation, knowing they weren't worth it, and didn't want to waste any more time on their thoughts, "Mouth breathers..."

The brunette felt an arm slither around her bare waist, earning a surprised gasp from her.

"Did I scare you?"

Iris groaned and stopped in her tracks after hearing his voice. The

cacophonous chatter in the parking lot quieted as the audience now had entertainment to indulge in and gossip about. The king, their king had targeted the new girl, the weird girl.

"Now what?"

"Let me take you home," His hand moved to the small of her back as he directed her towards his Camaro.

"Thanks for the offer, but I can walk home."

"I can't let a lady walk home," That purr, he did it again. The purr that threw her nerves on edge and made her knees weak, the purr that was overly drenched in sex appeal like a drunk girl covered in alcohol.

"It's the 80's, not the 50's. I'll be fine."

"Chivalry doesn't have to die at this age."

The two were nearing his car and Iris started diverging toward a different path, "I'd prefer to walk home."

"Let me take you home," Billy snatched her arm before he tugged her to his car and opened the passenger side door. "After you, Chicago."

"I'm good," She gave him an obviously fake smile, "Really."

"I insist," His jaw clenched, keeping his charming smile present on his face for the viewers.

Iris glanced around the parking lot, it now being dreadfully silent as a large number of students watched them carefully. Her peer's judgmental expressions and focused eyes made Iris feel so much smaller like she was the new bearded lady in a freak show. Growing incredibly uncomfortable, she finally turned her attention back to Billy.

"Well?" A shit-eating grin took over his face once he realized he'd won this battle.

"...Fine," She whispered and threw herself in the front seat, desperate

enough to accept a ride from Billy just to shield herself from her classmate's scrutiny.

Slamming the passenger's side door shut, Billy sauntered toward the driver's side and quickly slid into his seat before turning the ignition on. Highway to Hell started blaring throughout the car's speakers as the seats vibrated violently from the strong base, leading Iris to buckle herself in, and prepare herself for a frightful drive. Billy slammed on the accelerator after switching the gear to 'drive' and raced out of the lot. Surprisingly, as fast as Billy was driving, Iris felt comfort from how smooth the ride felt. She rested her head back, allowing the afternoon sun to kiss her face as the wind coaxed her hair to dance along with its movements, slowly relaxing into the leather seat, and clearing her mind, temporarily forgetting she was sitting next to Billy Hargrove.

"Hey."

"What?" Iris rolled her head on the headrest to face Billy—who looked extremely breath-taking under the golden sun, highlighting his structured jaw, and perfect hair.

"Where do you live?"

"Why?"

"So, I can take you home?"

"...Oh, right."

"Unless you want to go back to my place?" He questioned seductively, avoiding the road with his eyes as he laid them upon her face instead, and removed his hand from the wheel to place it on her thigh.

Iris's eyes followed Billy's movements, blinking profusely as she stared at his hand hugging her thigh as if it would make it go away. Unfortunately, she wasn't telekinetic, and instead swiped his hand off her lap, and reverted her gaze back to his face. "I live on the corner of Cherry Street."

The smirk never faltered from his face as he leaned closer, "You don't

want to go back to my place?"

Iris returned the smirk, reaching toward the sun kissed Californian, and placing the tips of her fingers on his jaw. He stared at her curiously and scoffed after she turned his head back toward the road, "I don't think we'd make it there alive by the way you're driving,"

"My place it is," he declared and pressed on the pedal harder.

"No. My house, or else."

"Damn, you want me to come over already?"

"You know what I meant."

Rounding a corner into a familiar subdivision, Billy's hand found its way on Iris's thigh again, "I know we'd have a lot of fun."

"Pretty sure my type of fun is completely different from yours." She crossed her left leg over her right, causing Billy's hand to slide off.

"Don't say that, Chicago," Billy pulled over to the curb on the corner of Cherry Street before throwing his car in park. He turned toward Iris and gave her a crooked and irresistible grin. "I'm sure we've got some similar hobbies."

Iris rolled her eyes, trying not to laugh at his innuendo, "Thanks for the ride, I'll be going home now."

"Hold on," Billy locked the passenger side door, making Iris sit up in alert. "Let's chat for a while."

He leaned in, his hand once again finding its way to her thigh, and running his thumb in circles along the inside area. His grip tightened, not in a painful way, but in a sexually aggressive way, in an I-need-you-now way. The touch was electrifying.

Iris daringly turned in his direction, "I have nothing to talk to you about."

"I do," Billy gave her thigh a quick squeeze before sliding his hand higher while his blue eyes imprisoned her green ones. His tongue

pressed against the top of his teeth as he looked her over thoughtfully, allowing the pink flesh to drop, and swipe a small layer of saliva over his bottom lip.

"What could you possibly wanna talk to me about?" Iris laughed, finding it amusing how persistent he was. She knew he only wanted her for sex, she knew it from the start. And if she were drunk, she might have considered it. She could try to deny it all she wanted, but she knew deep down she held a strong, sexual attraction toward him.

"Well," he hummed, his eyes trailing along her face and lips, "Not necessarily talking."

"Mm-hmm, there it is."

He darted forward, his hand gliding forward along with his movement as it sat dangerously close to her vulva, "Let me take you on a date. It'll be fun."

His eyes were hungry, creating a spark within Iris, and causing her to lean toward him out of instinct. Her hand replicated his, perfectly firm upon his muscular thigh as she watched his eyes falter—surprised by her reaction. Her eyes, heavily lidded, glossed over his lips before returning to his blue orbs. He could feel her hot breath against his mouth, already feeling a tightness in his groin area.

"You know," She purposely moaned, watching his eyes dilate to the fluctuation of her tone as he chewed on his bottom lip, "I'm sure you'd take me somewhere real nice," The brunette took her hand off of his thigh and firmly planted it against the car door, closing in on him, "And you'd show me how to have a good time, a really good time, right?" She watched the smirk grow on his face as he placed his left hand on her waist, brushing the tips of his fingers against her soft skin. "It sounds interesting and all, but I've got better things to do."

Immediately unlocking the passenger's side from Billy's control pad, Iris pushed herself away from him, muttering a 'see ya later' before climbing out of the car, and slamming the door shut behind her.

Frozen from the unexpected play she pulled on him, Billy pulled himself together, and slammed his hand on the horn, watching Iris

turn toward his car through his rear-view mirror. He stuck his head out the window with a perfectly present smirk plastered across his lips and called out, "I'll pick you up Friday!"

Iris rolled her eyes before she turned back around, hiding a devilish grin from his view as she muttered incoherently, "Too bad I don't actually live on Cherry street."

3. Chapter 3

Happy Holidays~! Hope everything's going well for you guys.

I've been struggling with this chapter for the past 2 weeks and finally decided to just post it, it's not gonna get any better so I'm done trying to fix it lol. The layout for this chapter was awesome in my head, but for some reason the words weren't coming out right... I'm sorry if this one's a little crappy, I hope you guys still enjoy it nonetheless. Thanks for everyone who left reviews, who followed, and favorited this story; it means a lot!

Regarding your review, **wickedgrl123**, the story is a year after season 2 because I decided to let myself struggle and come up with a plot for season 3... fml, why did I decide that again? RIP. I also don't have a face claim, I honestly loosely based the character off myself to make it easier for me to write... I just exaggerated on and changed a few traits. I'd prefer not to have one either just because I'd like for the readers to be able to imagine themselves as Iris.

P.S. Steve will be in the next chapter ;)

Friday|August 30, 1985

Friday came along, the same Friday Billy declared to pick Iris up for their date without her permission, and the same Friday she promised to take the kids to the lake. She wasn't putting any thought towards his declaration and instead tossed it to the side as if it were a useless remote control without any batteries. She wasn't positive if he was going to go through with it, even if he did, she couldn't care less. All Iris was looking forward to was spending time with her friends, enjoying their company, and watching them have fun before the summer weather fell prey to the fall. Regardless, it wasn't all fun in games—she was 'working', she was babysitting.

"Iris!" Mike hollered from the lake, drawing the brunette's attention away from the Spider-Man comic hovered above her face that prevented the afternoon sun from blinding her, "Why aren't you coming in?!"

"Hold on, I just got to the good part!"

"Well hurry up!" Max called out, "We wanna play chicken fight soon and none of these wussies wanna be my partner!"

"I'll be there in a bit! Let me just finish this section!"

They pestered her a little while longer before she finally gave in and ran into the murky, cold water. Plunging under the surface after reaching her friends, Iris slid beneath Max's legs and pushed herself back above the water while holding a mischievous grin, "Who's ready to lose?"

"...It's terrifying how similar you sound like a chicken, Dustin," Lucas huffed and rubbed the water from his eyes—which were now bloodshot from how many times he fell off of Mike's scrawny shoulders.

"Maybe if you didn't suck at winning, I wouldn't have had so much practice at clucking."

Max snorted at Dustin's reasoning, "Is that really something you should be proud of?"

"There's nothing wrong with embracing our weird talents," Will beamed, high-fiving his pro-clucker partner.

"You wouldn't be saying that if you lost," Mike retorted, slicking his wet hair back with a look of frustration evident on his face.

"Don't be a sore loser," The redhead playfully pushed his shoulder, making him grow more annoyed with her, and everyone else around him.

"Gimme all your lovin'~ All your hugs and kisses, too~" A melody could be heard from the distance, which startled the four boys because no one ever drove in this area; the road wasn't paved well enough for a vehicle to pass through comfortably.

"What's that noise?" Lucas inquired.

Iris was baffled by their lack of exposure to good music and their

reaction to ZZ Top's vocals, "That is music, my friends. Is Will the only one out of all of you who actually appreciates this fine delicacy?"

"You're really weird sometimes," Mike—who was still irritated and needed to prove it—was trying to prevent himself from cracking a smile.

"I'm offended," The green-eyed girl pouted, averting her gaze from the pale boy, and enjoying every moment of the music as it grew louder.

Will peered over at the only possible entrance the lake had, "Sounds like someone's coming."

"I think I know who it might be," Max frowned, flashing an apprehensive look toward Lucas.

"You don't think it's Billy, do you?" Lucas quizzed, the worry etched onto his face as he swam closer to Max like a protective boyfriend.

The freckled teen nodded, carefully watching the jagged road as she anticipated, dreaded her step-brother's arrival.

"Why would he come here?" Mike blurted.

"You don't think he's here to drag Max home, do you?" Lucas wasn't directing the question to his friends but more towards himself, trying to come up with any solutions that would prevent Billy from taking Max away from them, from him.

"Even if he was," Dustin prompted, "How would he even know where to find us?"

I'm positive I didn't mention any of this to him, Iris nibbled on her bottom lip, her mind flashing back to when Billy dropped her off on Monday, and asserted he'd be back to pick her up for their date...which was supposed to be today. *He wouldn't be coming here for that... Right? He doesn't even know where I, or the kids are... there's no way. It's impossible! ...It couldn't be, could it?*

That's when he pulled up, parking his car, and stepping out of the

vehicle clad in denim jeans and a jacket. Puffing on his cigarette as if it were his life support, the toxic fume encircled him and his gorgeous messy curls, making him seem that much more attractive than usual.

"Shit," Max cursed.

"You weren't home," Billy stated in a slightly irritated tone as he pointed his words toward Iris, but the others assumed it was towards his step-sister.

So, she replied, ready to justify her actions, "Mom knows Iris is watching me today so—"

Casting the redhead a pointed glare from above his sunglasses, he interrupted her with a low growl, "Not you."

She was stunned, more so confused, and wondered who he was talking to then.

"What's funnier," He scoffed, returning his attention back to Iris before throwing the cigarette butt to the ground, "It wasn't even your house."

The corners of Iris's lip twitched and threatened to spill an amused smirk but she managed to keep a straight face, watching Billy in silence as she continued to ignore the confused whispers from the kids.

"You're clever," He grinned and ripped his denim jacket off, his t-shirt following soon after—proving the 4 pack Iris had guiltily imagined to herself was, in fact, real, "But so am I. I had to take a little detour, stop by the Wheeler's, and ask where the shit and her friends went to."

"He went to my house?" Mike frantically whispered, trying to avoid reeling the brute's attention toward him.

Unbuckling his worn-out leather belt, Billy peeled his tight jeans off, presenting a well-fit pair of red boxers that revealed a larger than normal package Iris could ever imagine. Her face grew hot and she instantly averted her gaze away from the half-naked man before

submerging it into the water, keeping her eyes above water level, and granting the cold liquid to sooth her heated cheeks.

"What's wrong?" He teased and tossed his sunglasses to the side, ignoring the fact his clothes were strewn along the ground, and sauntered toward the lake without any hesitation, "I can never get you to shut up, but now you're silent?"

The kids drew closer and huddled up together, observing the big bad approaching his prey—which they could only conclude, was their babysitter.

Iris—bothered by his comment—rose from the water, her shoulders barely penetrating the air as she stood at her full height, and gave him a deadpan expression, "Why are you here?"

Will whispered to the others, "What's going on?"

"I have no idea," Max admitted.

"Us, grown-ups, are gonna go to the deep end," Billy swooped his arm around Iris's waist, creating a ruckus from the freshman as they watched Max's step-brother drag her away from them, "Don't wait up."

"Hey! Let go of me!" She thrashed within his arms—not that her small form could do much against his muscular build—only to have him tighten his grip around her.

Her friends shouted behind her, too terrified to even move an inch from their location to save her.

"Let's finish our date since you were late," He turned her around in his arms so she could face him directly while he dragged her along to a concave, crevice near the small water fall, hiding themselves from view, from everyone, and the kids.

"I didn't agree to this," Iris grumbled and slapped his chest before she attempted to push herself away from him, hoping he'd release her. But he didn't budge, neither did she, so she scowled at him and repeated slowly, "Let. Me. Go."

Billy smirked and released her waist as he heard her gasp for air before watching her submerge into the obscure water. Iris didn't realize how deep the lake was in the area he had hauled her to, but thankfully she knew how to swim.

Resurfacing with an angry pout on her rosy lips, she spat a mouthful of water in his face.

Unfazed by her childish action, he blinked away the contaminated liquid and gave out a throaty laugh, "You okay?"

"What if I didn't know how to swim?"

He kicked himself onto his back and leisurely floated closer to the rock wall, eyeing Iris with a crooked grin, "But you do."

"What if I didn't?" She was irritated with his thoughtless actions (which was evident) and couldn't help but reprimand him, "Were you just gonna let me drown?"

Billy tossed a half-hearted shrug in her direction and then extended his arms toward her while he flicked his tongue against his teeth, practically begging her to come closer, "I would've saved you."

Iris's anger evaporated at the seductive expression he allowed her to witness—and if she were standing, she was positive her knees would buckle beneath her. Pressing her lips into a tight line, she avoided his gaze for a few moments to recuperate herself, "What a gentleman."

"Thanks," Licking his drenched lips, Billy reached forward, grabbing Iris's hands, and pulling her toward him.

"So..." Staring up at him quizzically, Iris's heart and mind had finally calmed down. She released her hands from his grasp and swam beside him, holding onto the rock wall to rest her arms and legs, "What do you want?"

"What do you mean?" He turned to the pale brunette, mesmerizing the beauty marks speckled across her neck, shoulders, and collarbone, wondering to himself what other areas along her body were dusted with birthmarks.

"What do you want from me?" She pressed her back against the crevice and extended her arms to the side, gripping onto the jagged wall as she shifted her face forward while glancing at him every so often, "If you keep following me around, won't your fan club be upset?"

He scoffed, finding her question amusing, "Following?"

"That is what you're doing. I mean, you even went to the Wheeler's to find out where I was," She turned her head in his direction, peering at him as her long, wet hair fell forward, and hung limply over her shoulders. "Now that I think about it, wouldn't that technically be considered stalking? So, California, why are you stalking me?"

Lunging forward, Billy surprised Iris by pinning her against the wall she was previously resting against. Her eyes darted around the cage he made around her, finally resting on his strong arms and the obviously present veins that protruded against his toned muscles. The water glided along his skin, tempting her eyes to follow as the droplets cascaded toward his shoulders, and introduced her to his broad chest. He was ripped, he was beautiful, and that made her weak. She bit her lip, ripping her eyes away from his chest and onto his face.

He allowed a guttural moan to fall from his mouth, causing Iris's orbs to waver beneath his alluring gaze, completely, and utterly captivating her, "What can I say? I want, what I want."

Entranced by his enticing blue eyes, Iris remained silent, her previous words now caught in her throat.

"You call it stalking," Dropping his hand from the rock wall, Billy hovered it near her face, his fingertips grazing against her barely wet skin, "I call it determination."

"Determination?" She glanced at his hand, finally breaking away from his gaze, and smirking slyly, "Or is it because you made a stupid bet with your friends to see how fast you can sleep with the new girl?"

"I don't need a bet to prove I can sleep with someone." He stated cockily, causing her to roll her eyes, "I just want you, 'cause I want

you."

"Why?"

Leaning closer toward her with each word, Billy admitted, "You're exciting..." His wet lips hovered over hers, making Iris uncomfortably conscious of their close proximity while she appreciated how soft his lips looked, and wondered how soft they truly felt.

"I can tell you want me, too." Billy planted his hand on her chin as he placed his thumb on the center of her mouth, watching her shudder as he dragged her bottom lip down, and observed it smack back into place after he released his grasp.

"You wish," Iris shivered a whisper, trying to calm her rapidly beating heart, but his actions weren't helping.

His fingers trailed along her neck and down to her shoulder where her bathing suit rested. Playing along with her bikini strap, he left each place that he touched burning hot—regardless of how cold the water was—and making it that much harder for her to stay in control.

Iris wasn't a virgin, nor was she experienced. She had only been with one man, but once you've tasted the forbidden fruit; the future temptations were much harder to decline. And when you had someone as gorgeous as Billy Hargrove turning you on with each flick of his tongue, the thought of repressing yourself seemed like a sin.

"I don't have to, babe," He purred, annoyed that she was avoiding his stare, and pressed his body into hers, receiving the reaction he intended, the reaction he wanted.

She inhaled sharply in response, her eyes instantly flying up to his, their noses now brushing against each other, as their hot breaths mingled together.

"I can see it in your eyes."

Iris huffed, exasperated, "You're blind."

Billy chuckled, "If you weren't interested you wouldn't be letting me

touch you like this."

He's right, he's absolutely right. She closed her eyes tightly, mentally slapping herself for allowing him to touch her, to talk to her, and to unintentionally arouse her, "Are we done here? I need to get back to my friends."

"Friends? Shouldn't you have friends your own age? ...Like me? I'm your friend, and I can definitely be more than that," He breathed softly, his mouth ajar as he slowly maneuvered himself around her perfectly parted lips in a teasing manner; threatening her with a kiss—a kiss he knew she wanted, "...Just say the word."

"I'm sure you'd love that," Iris sighed as her eyes darted from his baby blues to his wet lips, finally breaking out of the trance he held her in once she felt his hot flesh wandering near the top of her breast, snapping and twisting her thin bathing suit strap.

Averting her eyes from his and onto his hand, her jaw clenched, and her gaze instantly shot back up to his, "Seems your hand's impatient for it."

"It's not just my hand," He mumbled and darted forward, his wet lips briefly brushing against hers, creating an electric current to run from her mouth, and travel down her spinal cord.

Iris's eyes widened in shock as she slammed her palm against his chest, surprising even him with how much force she used to push him backwards, "Is that how you win girls over? By sheer force?"

"I don't have to do anything really," Billy shrugged with a smug smile, "They come beggin'."

"I guess that's the difference between me and them. They're 'apparently' begging... but I never asked for it."

That crooked smirk spread across his lips, that stupid smug grin that seemed to annoy her, "Is that what you keep telling yourself?"

Iris didn't waste another second and quickly paddled away from him. She was pissed at herself, pissed at how she still found him attractive even with his dominant and demanding personality, and pissed that

she basically allowed him to kiss her without permission, and even more pissed at the fact that she actually would've consented if her head wasn't on straight. It was her fault things escalated so quickly. Because she allowed him to keep pestering her, to keep trying to win her over, and even though it was hard to admit, she almost craved for his attention, his affection, his fingers lingering along her skin, showing her the pleasure she deserved, the pleasure she needed.

Iris swam over to the group, who stood in a tight huddle as they discussed angrily amongst each other. Mike was the first one to notice her return and quickly turned to his friends, telling them to shut up.

"Iris!" Dustin cried in relief as he swam over to her and threw his arms around her, "I thought you died!"

Sarcastically, she joked, "Glad to know if I did, you guys wouldn't have tried to save me."

"That's not true!" Mike argued. "We were trying to come up with a plan to overthrow him."

"Overthrow? What is this? Battle of the Kings?"

Lucas reassured her, "We didn't hear you scream so we knew you were fine."

She was enjoying teasing them mercilessly, and retorted, "I have to scream to be in danger?"

"That's not what he meant, Iris," Max elbowed the boy, sending him a side glare as if to say he was stupid to even say that out loud.

Will, wearing a vivid expression of worry, questioned, "Does that mean he hurt you?"

"God, no!" She exclaimed with a laugh, "What do you take me for? A weakling?"

They all cracked a smile, happy that she was safe, that she was alright.

"But," Mike blurted as he leaned over and searched for any signs of Max's step-brother, "What'd you do to Billy? He hasn't come out."

She stated seriously, "I killed him."

"WHAT?!" They all screamed in unison.

"I ditched his body in a little crevice near the waterfall."

"Are you serious?" Dustin murmured quietly.

"Yeah."

They were all frozen, stunned at her response and her relaxed expression. The kids weren't new to death, especially a death done by a friend—a girl friend, specifically: Eleven. But Iris knew nothing of this telekinetic girl, the group made sure of it. They wanted to keep their beloved friend safe and away from the public's eye (which is why Iris knew nothing of it).

Warily staring at their uncomfortable expressions, Iris cleared her throat with an awkward laugh, trying to lighten the atmosphere, "Jeez, I was just joking. You guys didn't really think I was serious, did you?"

Dustin released a huge sigh of relief as the others started cackling hysterically to turn their stiff behavior into a humorous joke.

Lucas clapped Iris on the back, causing her to sputter a short cough, "That's a good one, Iris!"

"Yeah, you really got us there!" Will nodded enthusiastically.

Iris stared at them skeptically, wondering why they were acting so strange, and why they were so tense when she made that stupid joke. There was something they were hiding from her and she wasn't entirely sure what it was, but she knew it was serious. Whatever happened... made an impact on them and their lives.

"We should get going," Max cleared her throat, trying to break through the awkward conversation, "It's getting late and I should be getting home soon, or I'll miss my curfew."

"Yeah," Iris agreed quietly, still in thought, still questioning their behavior, "Let's get going."

The group trudged out of the lake to reach their pile of discarded clothing before patting themselves dry with their towels. Roughly pulling their clothes on as the fabric skidded over their skin, the group gathered their items, mounted their bikes and skateboard, and started their journey back home, leaving Billy and his Camaro behind.

Iris couldn't help but wonder why Billy remained hidden and why he didn't just leave when she had, *Was he embarrassed?*

She didn't have much time to linger on that thought because Dustin, Lucas, Max, Mike, and Will began throwing questions at her from every direction.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa," She waved her arms in front of her, hoping the action would quiet them down so she could decipher what they were trying to say, "One at a time, please."

"Halloween," Mike stated, "What are your plans?"

"-And they better be with us," Will demanded with a cute pout.

"Or else," Max sent her a pleading look as if to say, 'don't leave me with them'.

"I don't do well with threats," Iris joked.

"This is a serious matter, Iris," Dustin declared.

"Life or death," Lucas added.

"Isn't it a little early to be thinking about Halloween? It's the end of August."

Dustin said firmly, "It's never too early for Halloween."

"Well, then... I have no plans, but I'm sure you've guys got something up your sleeve and you're gonna drag me into it whether I like it or not."

Grinning, Dustin sent her an exaggerated wink, "I'm glad we're on the same page."

"So, what are we doing for Halloween?"

"Obviously we're gonna go trick 'r treating," Mike started.

Will continued, "Then we're thinking of watching horror movies at my place."

"But we're having trouble figuring out our costumes," Max finished.

"It needs to be a group costume or some sort of theme," Lucas explained, "You see, last year we went as the Ghost Busters."

Mike hissed, "You can hardly call it a group, we had two Venkman's"

Lucas rolled his eyes in annoyance, "No one wants to be Winston, Mike!"

"We had a thing, Lucas!"

"Shut up!" Dustin yelled. "Let's focus on this Halloween, got it?"

Iris giggled, enjoying their little spat, "Sounds like a predicament."

"They're really into it," Max mumbled so only the brunette could hear, "Just go with it or you'll never hear the end of it."

"Back to the issue," Lucas grumbled and pursed his lips in distaste toward his best friend Mike before flicking his attention to Iris, "Do you have any suggestions?"

"I hear the Care Bears are hip right now."

Mike was dumbfounded, "Are you serious?"

"...Joking," Laughing to herself, Iris suggested, "What about slashers?"

"That's a good idea," Max agreed, wanting the discussion to be over, "Plus, I already have a Michael Meyers costume."

Lucas grinned, thankful for Iris's contribution, "I'll put it on the list."

"There's a list?"

Max shook her head, indicating she should just stay quiet, and not ask any more questions. The older girl just laughed in response, finding the irritated expression on the redhead's face amusing.

Rrrr..!

Everyone immediately knew Billy's car was nearing by the sound of his engine roaring in the distance, so they moved closer to the edge of the road, waiting for his tires to screech against the gravel once he reached them.

The dirty blonde rolled his window down as the smoke from his cigarette filtered out of the car, "Get in."

Everyone knew the comment was directed toward Max considering he never acknowledged her friends; they were invisible to him.

"You'll never make it home by curfew," He growled and gave her a look that said 'don't make it harder than it has to be' and she reluctantly agreed.

"You comin'?" He flashed a grin at Iris who shook her head in response.

"It's no trouble, really!" Max exclaimed, smiling at the thought of sharing a ride with her best friend, especially since it would relieve the tension between Billy and her.

"Nah," Iris voiced, "I need to see them home. I wouldn't feel comfortable if I didn't."

"Suit yourself," Billy winked at her before he stepped on the accelerator and drove off.

Dustin immediately turned to the brunette after the Camero left their sight and asked, "Do you like him?"

"I barely know the guy," She answered hesitantly, surprised by his forward question, "Why are you even asking me that?"

Will mustered up the courage and answered, "Because earlier he said something about you guys going on a date."

"Yeah, a date I never agreed to."

Lucas stated, "He must be scheming something."

"I don't think he's smart enough to even think of something clever," Mike retorted.

"You need to be careful," Will agreed with the others, worried that Iris had landed herself in some trouble.

She smiled, not used to so many people caring for her well-being, "You guys are too cute, really."

Will and Iris finally arrived at the Byers residence after dropping the other three boys off and noticed Joyce peeking through the curtains. The mother thought she heard a noise and was ultimately relieved when she realized it was her son and Iris scuffing along the driveway.

"Alright, see ya kid," Iris ruffled Will's hair, expecting an angry reaction from him, but received something entirely different.

"Bye friend," His voice came out strained and monotone as he stared at Iris with bleak eyes and a fake smile.

She raised an eyebrow, curious as to why he seemed robotic and unfamiliar at that moment, "What'd you say?"

Within a blink of an eye, Will was back to normal, staring at Iris curiously, "...Bye ...Iris?"

She pursed her lips for a moment in thought before shrugging her shoulders, automatically assuming he must've been acting a little awkward because his mother was watching them, and he felt uncomfortable.

"Will!" Joyce called out, waving excitedly at the doorstep. "Hurry inside, I've got your favorite meal!"

Joyce was very fond of Iris, she even considered her as family, as the daughter she would've loved to have. She appreciated the young girl a lot, especially since Jonathan left for college, leaving Mrs. Byers empty-handed when it came to looking after Will. Iris was a lifesaver, or so Joyce told her.

"Coming!" He smiled in response and jogged near the entrance of his home.

Joyce quizzed, "Iris, did you want to join?"

"No thanks, I should be getting home. I'm sure my parents are worried." Even though she knew they weren't.

"Be careful on your way home then."

Waving goodbye, Iris flashed the two a toothy grin, "Of course, Mrs. Byers."

4. Chapter 4

I'M SOOOORRY. This chapter has been driving me nuts! I've been working on it for over a month, fixing, deleting, and re-writing it. I'm not happy with it but I don't think it's going to get any better so I figured I'd might as well just publish it rather than struggle with it any longer.

It seems a few of you that have commented are a little confused with some character's situations and I'm here to clear it up a bit:

Nancy is a year younger than Steve and Billy so she's a senior just like Iris (she'll be added in the later chapters). **Billy** flunked his senior year so he's re-taking it. **Jonathon** is in college he wanted to go to New York University. **Steve** wanted to stick around for Nancy's senior year instead of go to college and mentioned he'd work for his dad. But for some reason I just see him working under Hopper and really hope that happens in season 3! So in this one he's a cop in training. I honestly don't know how being a cop works, if you need schooling? But I have a few friends, right out of high school, started working for the police? So I'm assuming it's like a training program? We're just gonna pretend I'm accurate for this story lol. **Nancy** and **Johnathon** are together.

I hope you guys like how I wrote Steve, I had to re-watch ST just to make sure lol.

For Iris and Steve's relationship, I didn't want to make her fall for him right away just like she did with Billy. She thinks he's cute and find's him fun but she doesn't have feelings yet. I wanted a development to happen.

Again, thank you for the reviews, follows, and favorites they mean a lot. If you have any suggestions or critiques, don't be afraid to let me know. I know some of you wanted to hear more of Billy's thoughts, so I'm trying to do that with not only Billy, but also Steve (starting with this chapter).

Speaking of mama Steve, any of you guys going to Stranger Con? I just got my weekend passes and a photo op ticket with Joe Keery :D

P.S. I've been having trouble with the stupid lines you can use to separate paragraphs and such. Every time I publish a chapter, I can't see the lines diving my paragraphs? I hope you guys can see them? But because I can't, I'm using **(Insert Line)** to help distinguish the separation between paragraphs.

Friday|September 6, 1985

Crickets chirped along with the cicada's lullaby, barely coating the croaks the toads belted along the muddy edge of the pond Iris frequently found herself staring at when her mind was much too cluttered. She had accidentally stumbled upon the lagoon when she went searching for Dustin's cat Tews with the others. And ever since then, she regularly found herself perched near the pond's soaked border, watching the moon's reflection ripple comfortably across the water. This became her thinking place, a place to escape to when she needed to be alone; away from everyone and everything.

Located near the entrance of one of the many forests in Hawkins, the lagoon was only a 20-minute walk away from Iris's home and she was thankful for that considering it was her haven. Every time she stepped foot in its vicinity, a comforting warmth enveloped her like a mother wrapping its child in a blanket. And she needed that whenever she felt stressed, especially after the terrifying news Iris and the rest of the town found out earlier that morning. Two students—that were from the same high school—had gone missing and officials couldn't determine the reasoning behind it. It was unsettling to hear but even more frightening that it happened in her home.

Shifting through her thoughts, she couldn't help but question herself whether it was an abduction or if they simply ran away? Nothing made sense. The two teenagers weren't friends. They were different ages and fell into different cliques, so the rumors that were mercilessly spread throughout the town of them running away together seemed far-fetched; just a bad cover up the cops used to sweep under the rug.

Iris wasn't sure what happened, and just like the rest of the community, she prayed for their safe return. Taking the unfortunate event into initiative, she warned her friends not to stay out too late

(unless she was with them) because she didn't want anything bad to happen to them. But their reaction caught her off guard. They responded awkwardly and whispered amongst themselves as a strange spark nestled within each one of their eyes as if they **knew** what the cause was. Iris disregarded it immediately though, knowing all too well how creative the bunch was and how interested they were in solving tough crimes due to their heavy investment in Dungeons & Dragons. Plus, everyone was different. Maybe this was their way of coping with the situation?

"Honestly, I should stop freaking out," Iris violently shook her head, trying to clear her mind, "The kids will be fine and my missing classmates will come back. It's probably just some prank... Halloween is next month anyway."

Speaking of missing kids, she couldn't recall the last time she saw Billy Hargrove. It had to have been a week ago during the lake incident. Ever since then she hadn't seen him in school or any of the classes she shared with him.

Iris sighed and chuckled at her ridiculous thought, "I definitely shouldn't be worrying about him. He's probably out, banging some chicks, and marking more tallies on his 'fuck-it' list."

Crunch.

The sound of a twig snapping pulled Iris from her thoughts, making her sit up rigidly, and pay close attention to her calm surroundings. A low growl gurgled a few yards back and Iris stiffly turned her head from side to side, examining the open area around her for any signs of an animal. But she couldn't see anything. She only heard a wet, grotesque wheezing sound. Iris couldn't tell if the creature was stalking its prey or if it was dying and because the mixture of noises it made were so foreign to her ears, she wasn't interested in staying to figure it out.

What the fuck is that? Iris slowly pushed herself onto her feet—too afraid to make any noise—and inched toward one of the many trees around her, hoping if she hid behind it, whatever was there wouldn't notice her.

Her eyes shifted rapidly around her, hugging her peripherals as she stalked closer to the large plant. *Just a few more inches*, the brunette hesitantly lifted her right foot, carefully trying to avoid drawing any attention to herself, and extended it closer to the tree.

Snap.

Fuck! Iris held her breath, immediately aware that the animal's growling stopped. The green-eyed girl felt the hairs on the back of her neck stick straight up as a wave of goosebumps descended from her head to her toes. Her eyes shook fearfully as she waited a few minutes—which felt like hours—for any movement from the creature, but she heard nothing and figured she must have scared it away.

Iris released the breath she was desperately holding and turned around only to be met with a blinding light.

"Holy shit!" She screamed, her hands clinging to her chest as she stumbled backward in fright.

Before she could fall to the ground, the owner of the flashlight reached forward, grabbed her arm, and effortlessly stabilized her, "Are you okay?"

"Yeah..." Iris nodded, trying to cover her eyes from the radiant light the man had permanently trained on her.

"Oh, my bad," He dropped his flashlight away from the girls face after he realized how long he drowned her sight with it, finally allowing her to blink away the mirage of floating lights from her vision.

The policeman—who looked not much older than her—scrambled to shut his flashlight off and hook it to his belt. As awkward as his actions were, his appearance was the complete opposite. He was handsome with a full head of thick, brown hair and a strong, structured jawline any girl would swoon over. And from the permanent smolder on his face, Iris could tell he knew it, too.

He looks like he's still in high school... Iris couldn't believe someone as young as him was an officer but she sure as hell wasn't afraid to

admit the uniform suited his small, but muscular frame perfectly.

Unsure of his status or whether he was a real cop, Iris decided to put her thoughts on the back burner and blindly trust the man in front of her. She wasn't sure why; she couldn't pinpoint it, but something about him made him seem reliable and trustworthy.

"You scared me," She confessed, not knowing what else to say to break away from the uncomfortable staring contest they seemed to have fallen into.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to," Steve Harrington flashed her a reassuring smile as he ran his hand through his fluffy hair, causing a few pieces to fall over his forehead.

It was his night, and a few other deputies in training, to patrol. And although he dreaded the task at hand, he couldn't be more than happy to stalk the dark woods, especially since they led him to the cute girl that stood in front of him.

"It's fine..." Iris tugged on the sleeves of her black, zip-up hoodie as she grew nervous under the officer's fixed stare. The fact that all of his attention was on her while he held a pleasantly bright smile—as if he had no care in the world—made her feel even more uncomfortable.

Why is he staring? He's making me feel so awkward...

She cleared her throat and averted her gaze from his, trying to break the uncomfortable silence, "...What are you doing out here?"

"I should be asking you that question," Steve chuckled, finding her inquiry amusing.

She mentally smacked herself for asking him such a stupid question, feeling the embarrassment well up inside her, "Right, erm, I was... clearing my head."

His smile fell from his face, the worry now etched in his eyes like a parent, "By yourself?"

She didn't respond, well aware she would be reprimanded, and

decided to keep quiet. Although Iris didn't view the police so highly after today's incident, she would never disrespect them (or anyone for that matter), regardless of age, seniority, or authority. Her parents raised her better than that; she knew better than that. And in this situation, she knew she was in the wrong, so she had no right to defend her actions.

Steve watched her carefully, stunned at the fact that she didn't roll her eyes and ignore him like any normal teenager would. He could tell she was different just by that action and felt that it was alright for him to continue with his warning, "It's dangerous to be out this late, especially alone."

"You're right," The corners of her mouth lifted as she sent her superior an apologetic smile. "I'm sorry."

"Well...as long as you know," Steve replied awkwardly, not used to receiving such a relaxed response, and shifted the conversation to a question he wanted to ask her when he first noticed her rigid form from earlier, "...What were you hiding from anyway?"

"Oh..." Iris's eyes widened as she remembered the creepy noises moments ago, "There was an animal..." She tilted her head to the right and left before she peeked over the deputy's shoulders, trying to see if the creature was anywhere in sight, "It was growling, and it sounded weird...? So, I went to hide behind a tree—"

"Behind a tree?" Steve was trying to repress a smirk as a small chuckle rippled from his throat. He found it comical that the only hiding spot she could come up with was a tree rather than the large and thick bushes that surrounded them.

Iris spotted the sarcastic tone laced within his question, making her realize how easygoing the officer seemed to be, and figured it was all right to act just as lighthearted.

"It was the only thing I could think of," She pouted playfully, "Would you prefer if I threw myself into the water and hid there?"

Steve quipped back with a large grin, "Not sure if it'd be the best solution but if it worked, I'd be impressed."

"Are you doubting my skills?" Iris jokingly glared.

"You see," He sighed dramatically and waved his hands around as he spoke, "You know that guy who doesn't believe in ghosts until one day he experiences something supernatural? That's me. I only believe what I can see. So, maybe you should show me how it's done, and I promise I'll never doubt you again."

She giggled, almost forgetting—for that moment—the man before her was a cop and found herself leaning toward him. Like the warmth of a crackling fire attracting someone who just came home from the freezing outdoors.

"Anyway?" Steve prompted with a smile.

"Oh, right," Iris had almost forgotten their initial conversation. "Like I was saying earlier, when I was trying to hide I made a noise...then I couldn't hear it anymore."

"Well, whatever it was, it looks like it's gone. And it seems like you're alright?"

"...Yeah, I'm okay."

"I'm glad I could set your heart at ease," Steve winked.

The girl smirked, "Aren't you giving yourself a little too much credit?"

"Nope. I take pride in saving you from a racoon."

She snickered, trying to refrain from smiling at his joke, "It wasn't a raccoon."

"You're right, I'm *sorry*," The man heaved an exaggerated sigh. "The **squirrel**."

"Wow," Iris scoffed as she felt the corners of her mouth pull upward into an open mouth smile.

With a cheeky grin, his eyes narrowed affectionately. "Don't worry, I'll keep the killer squirrel between us."

"If you keep teasing me, I might just have to hurt you."

"Are you threatening an officer of the law?"

"I don't know, am I?"

The two chuckled amongst themselves, failing to notice how close they drew together during their squabble.

"Seeing as you're okay, I think it's time for you to go home," Steve took one step closer toward Iris and placed his hand on the small of her back before he pushed her forward, leading her toward the exit. "My car's nearby so I can drop you off."

She felt the warmth of his palm vanish from her and instead felt it linger near her lower back, knowing he was trying not to infringe on her personal bubble. Aware of his thoughtful actions, Iris peered up at him, admired his profile, and the few beauty marks scattered across his face and neck.

Feeling like someone was watching him, Steve glanced down and caught the brunette's vibrant gaze. He had never met someone with bright green eyes like hers before. They were so pigmented, so gorgeous; they almost seemed unrealistic.

Steve cleared his throat, realizing how long he had been staring at her, and looked away, "Everything good?"

"All good," Iris nodded curtly as they both neared the edge of the forest and spotted his car at the side of the road, "You know, you really don't have to drive me home. I can walk."

Surprised by her remark, Steve replied bitinglly, "How stupid do you think I am to let you walk home alone in the middle of the night?"

Iris smirked humorously, "Do I have to answer that?"

"Hah hah," He reciprocated her playful manner with a mocking tone, "Come on, let's go."

It didn't take long for them to reach the police vehicle. Once they did, Steve popped the passenger's side door open, rested his arm on it,

and leaned into the ajar door, "Where do you live?"

"Don't worry about it. I'll walk home from here."

"Did you not hear me the first time? I'm not gonna let you walk home alone," He pointed his stern eyes toward the passenger seat, indicating that she should stop fighting about it, and get in, "Tomorrow there'll be news of you disappearing because I decided to listen to you and let you walk home. **Alone. By yourself.**"

"You know," Iris giggled, "You're not a reassuring cop."

"I'm not a cop yet; I'm in training," Pointing a finger at her, as if to make himself clear, "And I'm here to protect you, not to be reassuring."

"Doesn't that go hand in hand?" Iris couldn't help but smirk, watching a dumbfounded expression fall on his face as his eyes wandered around, thinking over if what he said was correct, or if she was.

Steve shook his head and gave up as the gears in his mind overheated from how fast they were moving, trying to figure out the answer himself, "Forget it, just get in the car."

"I'm fine, honestly."

"I'm not letting you walk home."

"Come on," The green-eyed girl flicked her thumb to the road behind her while still staring at the worried deputy—who, she hoped, would finally cave in, "My place isn't that far from here, so you have nothing to worry about. I promise."

"Not gonna happen," Steve shook his head, determined to take Iris home safely. Of course, there was a selfish part of him that wanted to spend a little more time with her... but if he allowed her to leave on her own and something happened... he knew he wouldn't be able to forgive himself.

Iris admired his resolve and how serious he took his job. And even though she wouldn't mind being in his company for a little while longer, she really didn't want her parents to see her being dropped off

by a policeman this late at night—not that they would even be home to see it. But if there was a chance that the Moore's were home and they were greeted with flashing blue and red lights, let's just say she would never see daylight again.

"Please?" Holding a soft smile on her face, she begged sincerely, hoping he'd hear the desperation in her voice.

Fuck, Steve thought, witnessing one of the cutest puppy dog look's he'd ever received—and he had seen a lot in his lifetime, especially back in high school when he was the King, and girls begged and cried for his attention. Despite falling from that farce and committing himself to Nancy Byers (the one girl who had him wrapped around his finger,) even her puppy eyes couldn't compare to the petite girl in front of him.

"Fine," He groaned, unable to refuse her and her adorable expression. "You know, you remind me of some really annoying and persistent kids."

"Ouch," She winced as if his comment hit her right in the heart.

"Be careful," Steve warned and closed his car door, "Next time I see you in a situation like this, I'm taking you home. Got it?"

"Yes, sir," The brunette saluted the deputy, earning a soft laugh from him, and turned on her heel to start on her trek home.

"I can't believe I did that," Steve sighed and rested against the trunk of his car, watching over the younger girl until her form faded into the dark night, leaving him nothing to look after anymore, "Harrington, you're gonna regret this...and you're probably gonna get fired."

He heaved himself off his car and forced himself to continue his patrol. Steve didn't want to give Hopper the opportunity to potentially find out he wasn't doing his job and instead dawdling around with a high-schooler.

(Insert Line)

Iris Moore pulled her house key from her hoodie pocket right as she climbed the front steps of her porch. Jiggling the key in the door knob, she unlocked the door, and slid into her lit home. The fact that the lights were on was unusual and the brunette wondered if she accidentally left them on before she left for the woods.

"Mom? Dad?" She shut and locked the door behind her, peering around the living room before striding into the kitchen to see her parents sharing a meal of Chinese takeout. Iris was baffled to see her mother and father actually eating at the dinner table. It had been months since the last time she had even seen them considering they were constantly at work having to pull overnight's just to get their tasks done.

Iris could feel her cheeks burn from smiling so widely, "It's been awhile."

"Surprisingly they let us out early," Harold Moore mused in a monotone voice, barely looking away from his crossword puzzle to greet his daughter.

Vivian Moore, whose eyes were locked on the morning paper, asked, "Care to join us?"

The brunette energetically leaped into the seat between her parents and grabbed one of the packaged chopsticks from the middle of the table before gorging into the fried food in front of her.

Iris wasn't very close to her mother and father, she rarely ever saw them, excluding holidays and a few weekends throughout the year. They worked at a corporate office in downtown Chicago, an extremely busy one at that. They lived for work, it was what they were good at. Plus, they loved the money. Who didn't, when you needed it to live? So, the fact that they were sitting in front of her having a meal on a week day was very rare and she couldn't help but feel ecstatic to have dinner with her parents (even if it was takeout).

She was always alone, until they moved to Hawkins where she was constantly with her grandmother. It wasn't just because Genevieve Moore was sick... but because Iris missed being around family, she missed having company. The time she spent with her was probably

one of the best moments of her life... But after her grandmother passed away, it went back to the lonely nights of tv dinners and the quiet creaks of the floor boards, making sure Iris was well aware of how alone she really was.

"How was your day?"

"The usual," Her mother replied curtly before shoving a piece of orange chicken in her mouth.

Iris nodded and reached over to grab a small amount of chow mein, "Have you guys heard about the disappearances?"

Neither had replied, but Iris knew they were waiting for her to continue.

"Two teenagers from my high school have gone missing and the police are trying to convince everyone that they've just run away together. But I don't believe it."

Her parents never looked up from their reading material as they simultaneously munched on their food, unfazed.

"I think they're hiding something from us..." Iris looked back and forth between her indifferent parents, waiting for at least one of them to reply. It had been a long time since she'd seen them, had an actual conversation with them, and she wasn't interested in pouring her thoughts and feelings out to dry wall. Her parents always kept to themselves and had little to say. She understood they were tired from working hard all day but couldn't they put some effort into her? Just a little?

She sighed, "I just think the evidence doesn't match what the cops are telling us..."

Her father droned, "Are you a police officer now?"

"No," Her heart swelled in her chest, happy that she had gotten something, **anything** from them. "But don't you think it seems a little weird?"

"I think you're involving yourself in things you shouldn't be," Her

mom answered while her eyes continued to search through the article she was reading, "It's nothing more than a couple of kids running away from home."

Iris swallowed the remaining food in her mouth and stared at Vivian who couldn't even bother to rip her face away from the paper and send her daughter a reassuring glance, "What if I was one of the kids who disappeared? Would you believe the police if they told you I ran away?"

"Of course not," Mrs. Moore placed the newspaper down on the table with an annoyed sigh and finally initiated eye contact with her, "You would never do something stupid like that."

"Then what makes it okay to believe Zachary and Laura ran away together?"

"Maybe they like each other and their parents wouldn't allow it," Mr. Moore mused while scratching another word into his puzzle.

"Hypothetically," Iris ignored her father's mundane response, knowing she would only become more irritated if she took it to heart, "What if they were abducted but the police are persistent in covering it up as a runaway case?"

Her father snorted, "I doubt there would be an abduction in the middle of Hawkins, Indiana."

Her fingers fidgeted with the wooden chopsticks, "What if I was in the situation? Would you believe it was an abduction then? Or would you believe whatever the fuck the police tell you?"

"Language." They scolded her in unison as both of their gazes landed on Iris.

"Would you believe I ran away if they told you that, when something else actually happened?"

"Don't be silly," Vivian pursed her lips and knitted her eyebrows.

"There's no way you would be kidnapped. You're much too smart to put yourself in a situation like that," Harold stated.

"You know how to take care of yourself," Mrs. Moore added before taking a sip of her lemon water.

Iris felt dejected. Yet again, the point she was trying to get across was going over her parent's heads; what a surprise. Another potential bonding moment down the drain. She just couldn't win. All she wanted was to have a proper conversation with her family or play a stupid board game and have fun. No matter how much effort she put into their relationship, they wouldn't budge. It was like she was trying to nudge a concrete wall, expecting it to crumble down only for it to grow taller.

"...Thanks for the meal," She murmured, placed her chopsticks down on the table, and climbed the steps to her bedroom as her parents, uninterestingly, wished her a good night.